

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
For the Montana National Register of Historic Places Program and State Antiquities Database

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201202, 1410 8th Ave
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **1500 N. 30th Street**

Historic Address (if applicable): **NA**

City/Town: **Billings, MT**

Site Number: **24 YL 1859**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Yellowstone**

Historic Name: **Student Union Building**

Original Owner(s): **Montana State University - Billings**

Current Ownership ☐ Private ☒ Public

Current Property Name: **Academic Support Center**

Owner(s): **Montana State University - Billings**

Owner Address: **1500 University Drive
Billings, MT 59101**

Phone: **800-565-6782**

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **1N** Range: **26E**

NW ¼ NE ¼ NW ¼ of Section: **32**

Lot(s): **Unknown**

Block(s): **Unknown**

Addition: **Rimrock Rd MSU-B Campus** Year of
Addition: **Unknown**

USGS Quad Name: **Billings West** Year: **1957 updated
1975**

Historic Use: **Education building**

Current Use: **Education building**

Construction Date: **1955** ☐ Estimated ☒ Actual

☒ Original Location ☐ Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov/topofinder2

☐ NAD 27 ☒ NAD 83 (preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **692703** Northing: **5074477**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Date of this document: **March 2, 2010**

Form Prepared by: **Diana J. Painter, PhD**

Address: **3518 N. C Street, Spokane, WA 99205**

Daytime Phone: **(707) 364-0697**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: ☒ yes ☐ no

Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Date: **11/17/2010**

Evaluator: **Kate Hampton**

Comments: **Evaluated individually under Criterion C only.**

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Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

Site Number: **24 YL 1859**

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

X See Additional Information Page

Architectural Style: **Modern** If Other, specify:

Property Type: **Education building** Specific Property Type: **Student Union Building**

Architect: **Nordquist & Sundell** Architectural Firm/City/State: **Nordquist & Sundell, Billings, MT**

Builder/Contractor: **Unknown** Company/City/State:

Source of Information: **Architectural drawings**

The Academic Support Center, also known as the Computer Center, is a one-story, irregularly-shaped building with a flat roof. Originally built as the Student Union Building, it is located near the center of the Montana State University Billings campus on the east side. Its main entrance is located on the south façade of the building; the main secondary entrance is located on the east façade. According to the architectural drawings the building has a steel frame with laminated wood beams; state records refer to the construction as joisted masonry. It is finished in concrete block and rough-cut, tongue-and-groove siding and has a concrete foundation and a membrane roof. This modern structure was designed by Billings architects Nordquist & Sundell in 1954 and constructed in 1955.

South façade. The main entrance to the building is located within the apex formed by the two main wings. On the interior a large, open space is located on the west side of the building whereas rooms within the east side are organized around an east-west hallway that extends from the main entry to the easterly, secondary entrance. A new wing paralleling the original east-west wing is located in the northeast corner of the building. An exterior north-south corridor was formed on the north side near the center when the northeast wing was added. On the west side is a large covered patio, once an outdoor area for the building.

The entrance, which is located under a deep overhang, is approached via a broad concrete stair with eight steps and a tubular metal rail which is located at the sidewalk that parallels the main building façade. The ceiling of the overhang is finished in wood decking and supported by large, laminated beams supported in part by round metal posts. The entry consists of three wood doors with nearly full-height glass, surmounted by plywood panels. The doors here, as well as elsewhere on the building, retain their original hardware, which consists of two horizontal and one vertical curved bar in a dark-colored metal. To the left is a large, horizontally-oriented, fixed single light with a wood frame and a short transom window above. To the right is a small, L-shaped projection finished in pink-tinted concrete block with dimensions of 8"x12"x16". The easterly exterior wall of the large common area is to the left of the entry. It is clad in pink-tinted concrete block near the main entry. Further south is a single entry door of the same design as the main entry doors. Left or south of this door is a four-part aluminum window with an operable sash at the bottom and a transom within a wood frame above. To its left is a large, single light, fixed window with a transom above, set in a wood frame. These windows are typical of those found throughout the building.

The front or south façade to the right of the main entry has three parts. Toward the center is a small projection of concrete block, with small, horizontally-oriented lights with wood frames within the upper portion. This projection extends to nearly the fascia of the deep eaves in this location. The rest of the windows on this façade are set back from this projection within the main façade of the building. Walls here are clad in wide, horizontal tongue-and-groove siding. The windows are a combination of aluminum-frame windows with three horizontally-oriented lights and a transom set within a wood frame, and fixed single lights with a transom above, also set within a wood frame.

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Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The south façade of the west wing of the building displays a bank of four-light aluminum windows and single-light, fixed windows with transoms under deep eaves with a tall fascia. The tall parapet above the eave overhang is clad in horizontal pressed wood siding. The portion of the building on the left of this wing extends to the top of the parapet and is concrete block in a stacked pattern, topped with a metal coping. A wing wall extends from the face of the building in this location and encloses the west side of the eave overhang.

West façade. The west façade of the building encloses what was originally the common room for the Student Union. At roughly the center is the broad chimney, which rises above the roofline of the west wing here, which in turn rises above the roof of the office wing to the east. The right or south side of this façade has no openings and is clad in stacked concrete masonry in a pale pink tint. The left side is taken up by a large covered patio that previously functioned as an outdoor eating and gathering area. It is covered by a roof, supported by round metal posts, that continues in a deep eave that covers the windows on this portion of the building. There are two doors on this façade, of the same design as the doors at the front entry. The banks of windows here are composed of large, single-light, plate-glass windows in wood frames with transom windows interspersed with narrower fixed-light windows of the same design, and narrow, four-light aluminum windows with an operable lower sash and transom, set in wood. As is the case elsewhere on the building, these windows are set in an asymmetrical arrangement that in this location has a A:B:door:C:C:A:B:door:A pattern. The far left end of this façade is finished in concrete block.

North façade: The north, rear façade of the building is the most changed. The new addition is on the left or east side of the north façade. It is stucco-clad on the rear and is finished concrete block on the east façade. There is one flush metal door on this addition, on the right side, and a row of small, metal-frame windows on the west façade. These windows face onto a small courtyard that was formed when the new addition was constructed. Previously this area faced onto an open space to the east.

The south end and west side of this corridor retain their original features. The west side has a large, concrete block barbeque with a chimney that matches the main chimney on the building. The windows on this façade consist of broad, two-part windows with wood frames interspersed with a few aluminum-frame windows with horizontally-oriented lights. There is one door with a single light in the upper portion surmounted by a plywood panel on this façade. At the end of the corridor, on what was originally the north façade of the building, are three ganged, two-part windows with a square fixed light in the upper portion and an awning-style operable light below. The wall under the windows is clad in the same wide, horizontal tongue-and-groove siding seen elsewhere on the building.

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The west side of the north façade, west of the barbeque area, is clad in the same wide, tongue-and-groove siding seen elsewhere on the building. Eaves are deep, and the soffit is clad in wide tongue-and-groove as well. One wood door with a single light occurs within a small recess on the left side. Four small, fixed windows are located high on the façade to the right, along with a three-light window close to the center (this was previously a door). The end wall of the west façade is extended to the end of the eaves here, providing weather protection.

East façade. The east façade of the building has one, three-part window with a transom on the left or south side that matches the windows on the south façade. Adjacent to this window is a panel of concrete masonry units. To the right of this wall is a secondary entrance, which is recessed and covered with a deep overhang with extended beams and one round metal support. The entry here consists of a flush metal door with a single light in the upper portion, with a full-height window with two lights to its right. The wall to the right of this entry is finished in tinted concrete masonry units. There is one two-part window and a louvered vent set within the wall here, and one tall window in a recessed area with six lights with anodized aluminum frames. There are no other openings on this façade.

Changes over time. The major change to the building is the addition, which was designed by Drake-Gustafson Associates in 1995. This change necessitated removing the original façade on the northwest corner of the building; the new addition does very little to retain compatibility with the original façade, although it does use the same type of concrete block on the east façade.

It appears that the wood siding on the parapet on the west and west side of the south façade has been replaced with pressed wood. Otherwise the building retains its design features and materials. It is suffering from some deferred maintenance.

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Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

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HISTORY OF PROPERTY

☒ See Additional Information Page

The Student Union Building was designed in 1954 by the Billings firm of Nordquist & Sundell and constructed in 1955. As conceived it consisted of a lounge and dining area on the west side, with the lobby located at the main entrance, as it is today. The far north end of the building on this side was occupied by the boiler. The east-west hall led to the east entrance, as it does today. On the south side of this hall were offices, as is the case today. On the north side was the bookstore and a game room. The new addition to the building was designed by the Billings firm of Drake-Gustafson Associates in 1995.

The architects

Raymond Edward Nordquist was born in Detroit, Michigan on February 22, 1926. He attended Montana State College from 1946 to 1950, from which he was awarded a BS in Architecture. He worked for Edwin Osness in 1958 and for Cushing & Terrell from 1950 to 1953, before forming his own firm of Raymond E. Nordquist in 1953; he was joined shortly thereafter by Leonard Sundell. They practiced together as Nordquist and Sundell until 1959. Among the university buildings Nordquist is known for are the Student Union Building (described herein) and the Eastern Montana College of Engineering. He also designed the YWCA Building and West High School in Billings and the Montana State Oil Building in Bozeman.

The second partner in Nordquist & Sundell, Leonard Raymond Sundell was born in Miles City, Montana on July 19, 1922.

INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

☐ See Additional Information Page

Architectural drawings by Nordquist & Sundell. On file, Facilities Services, Montana State University – Billings accessed February 2010.

"Best Colleges 2010," *U.S. News & World Report*, March 2, 2010.

Bowker, R. R., *American Architects Directory* (First edition). Bowker LLC/American Institute of Architects, 1956 (Second edition, 1962; Third edition, 1970).

"State of Montana Building Detail Report – MSU – Academic Support Center," October 31, 2003. On file, State of Montana accessed February 2010.

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HISTORY OF PROPERTY

He attended the Montana State School of Mines, graduating in 1945, and Montana State College, graduating in 1949 with a BS in Architecture. He worked for Billings architect Chandler C. Cohagon from 1948 until 1953, at which time he joined Raymond Nordquist. Among the institutional buildings that Sundell designed when he was with Nordquist were Absarokee Hall (1953), the MSUB Student Union Building (1955), and the Billings YWCA (1955). He formed his own firm of Leonard R. Sundell in 1959 (*Bowker, 1962*).

Montana State University - Billings

Montana State University – Billings was founded in 1927 as the Eastern Montana Normal School. Before it became part of the Montana State University System in 1994 it was known as Eastern Montana College. Today it has over 4,000 students in 160 degree programs. The first building on the campus was Old Main, which was constructed from 1924 to 1927. It appears, judging from photographs of the campus taken in the 1920s through 1939, that the early campus buildings, with the exception of Old Main, are no longer extant.



POSTCARD SHOWING THE LIBRARY, CLASSROOMS & FACULTY
OFFICES AS AN ADDITON TO MAIN HALL.

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CAMPUS RESIDENCE HALLS ALSO INCLUDED THE DINING ROOM
(THE PORCHES SAW MANY A FOND EVENING FARWELL)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

NRHP Eligibility: ☒ Yes ☐ No ☒ Individually ☐ Contributing to Historic District ☐ Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Area of Significance: **ARCHITECTURE** Period of Significance: **1955**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

☐ See Additional Information Page

The Student Union Building at Montana State University – Billings is a Modern building, having been constructed using modern materials and displaying contemporary features that embody many of the tenets of modernism as it was practiced in the post-war era. As a small-scale institutional building it shares many the features and embodies the ideals also seen in residential buildings from the era. These include:

- expressing the structure through the use of exposed beams and infill panels of concrete masonry;
- using materials with natural or minimal finishes, such as laminated wood beams, exposed decking, and tinted concrete;
- maximizing the relationship to the outdoors through the use of window walls and covered porches/patios and other usable outdoor spaces;
- Incorporating other modern design features such as an overall horizontal aspect, the flat roof, expansive window walls, and clerestories for indirect lighting.

The building is a good example of small-scale, mid-century institutional building. It is significant, and individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, for its design qualities.

INTEGRITY

☐ See Additional Information Page

The building has moderate-to-good integrity. It retains integrity of location, setting, workmanship, feeling and association. It does not retain integrity of design or materials. The setting has been altered slightly by the addition of buildings around the structure, but most of these buildings were constructed within 7-10 years of the Student Union Building itself. New materials were introduced with the anodized aluminum windows and stucco exterior of the new addition. The anodized aluminum windows are not significantly different than the earlier aluminum windows on the building, but the synthetic stucco finish departs from the 'natural' finishes of the original building. The horizontal board siding on the parapets on the west and portion of the south facades is also new and appears to be not as wide as the original siding on the building.

The design of the building has been altered. The new addition infilled an "L" shape to the rear of the original building, but otherwise did not alter the building form. It caused the removal of two walls that combined windows and solid walls, similar to the other original building walls, and replaced them with essentially solid walls and in this sense, altered the design of the building. The new addition does not respect the design qualities of the original, but is not highly visible. It is this author's opinion that the building retains sufficient integrity to be considered a historic resource and individually eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C.

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

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Description: **Overview; west and south (front) facades, viewed from southwest**



Description: **Overview; north (rear) and west facades, viewed from northwest**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

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Description: **South (front) facade**



Description: **South (front) façade, entry detail**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

Site Number: **24 YL 1859**



Description: **West (side) façade, viewed from northwest**



Description: **North façade, viewed from northwest (new addition at left, rear)**

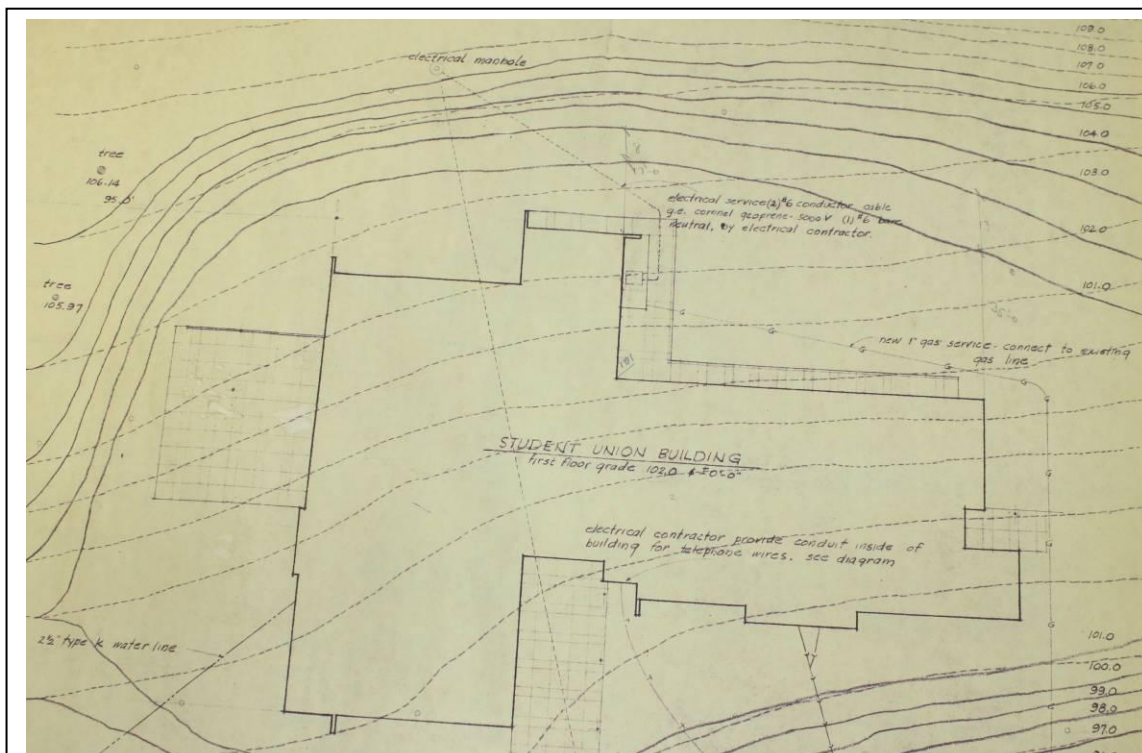
MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

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Description: **Window wall, typical**

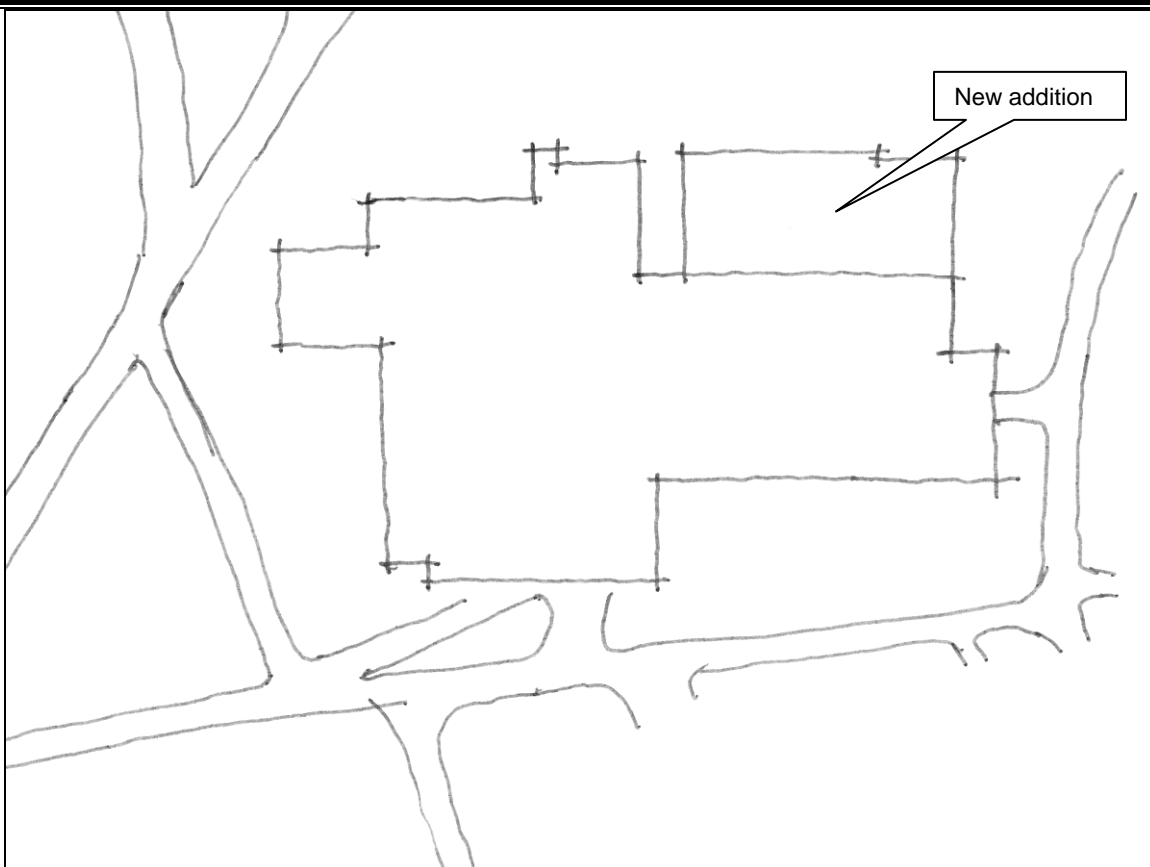


Description: **Original plan view without later addition**

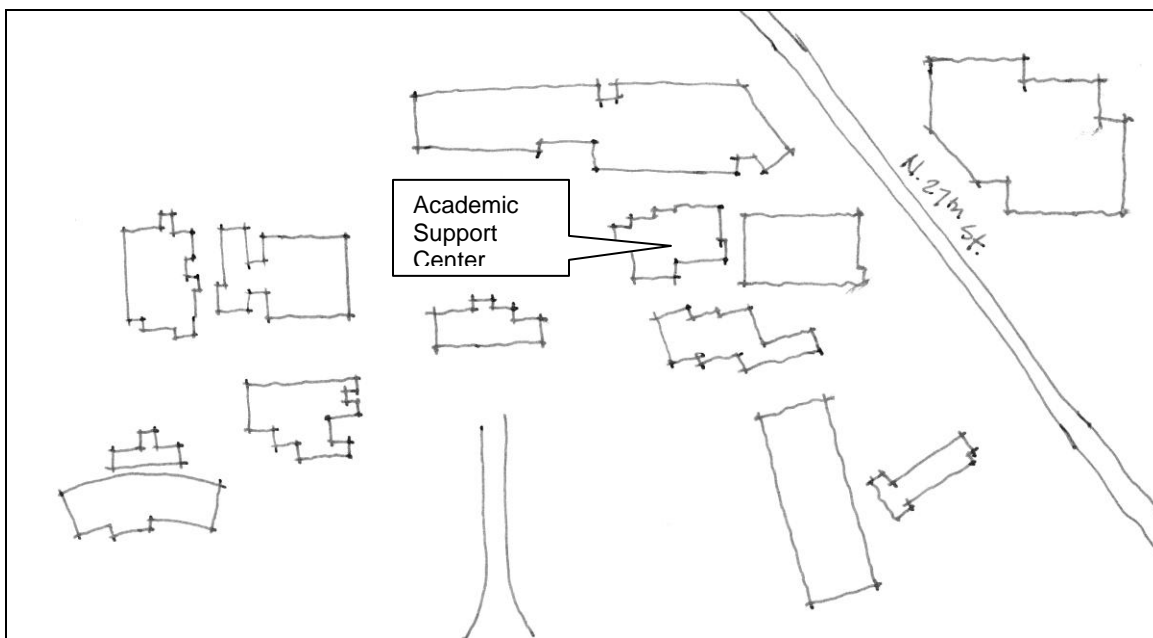
MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
SITE MAP

Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

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Academic Support Center



Montana State University – Billings campus

Property Name: **MSUB Student Union Building**

This is a detailed topographic map of Billings, Montana. The map shows the city's grid system with major roads like Grand Ave, 13th St, 27th St, 32nd St, and Broadway. Key landmarks include the VABM Airport, Rimrock Sch, Eastern Montana College (circled in red with an arrow pointing to it), Hilands Golf Club, Highland Sch, Pioneer Park, and several hospitals. The city name 'BILLINGS' is prominently displayed across the bottom. The map also shows the Rimrocks and the Yellowstone River. A red circle highlights the area around the Eastern Montana College and the Rimrocks. A red arrow points to the college building.